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# Gallery and Studio

CHARLES SPRAGUE PEARCE.

**I**N the salon of this year two pictures by an American artist attracted universal attention. They were "The Water-Carrier" and "The Prelude" by Charles Sprague Pearce, of Boston. The first was a subject of the kind which J. F. Millet and Jules Breton have naturalized in France, the out-of-door life of the poorer French peasants. It represented a young country girl, scarcely more than a child, dressed in rags and heavily laden with two large jars of water,

of the "Porteuse d'Eau," but the vigor of the painting and the strength and refinement of the coloring testified to the fact that, old as the subjects were, they were freshly conceived by the painter. The profile of the Andalusian girl is dreamy, melancholy, and full of the spirit of music. Her brownish skin and black hair furnish the key-note to the color of the picture. Her skirt is black and so are the stockings and shoes. Her jacket of a yellowish brown, and the shawl of dull red, thrown over her shoulder, are all that preserves the scheme from seeming somewhat monotonous. But, like certain older artists, Mr. Pearce knows how to get its full effect out of a touch of color, in itself

inction that has been conferred on only six Americans, Pearce included. It has been etched by De Los Rios. It has been pronounced by the critic of The London Times the best picture in the Salon, and (perhaps a better recommendation than this last) it has been purchased by John A. Lowell, of Boston. "The Water-Carrier" has not been without its share of public testimony to its value in France, for it has been reproduced in Le Monde Illustré; it has been praised in L'Opinion as destined to make a great impression on those who seek the beautiful in conscientious naturalism, and by Le Siècle as prognosticating a harmonist of the first order.



"REPOSE." BY CHARLES SPRAGUE PEARCE.

DRAWN BY THE ARTIST FROM HIS PICTURE IN THE MUNICH EXHIBITION.

one in each hand. Her surroundings were the rich grass of the meadows of northern France, and, in the background, the wretched hovel, her probable home, and an old windmill, just visible on the horizon. "The Prelude" was a simple composition representing merely a young and handsome Spanish girl seated in an old carved leather chair and playing or rather toying with a well-used guitar—a studio guitar. It was the art in these pictures, the refined and poetic feeling, the solidity and earnest strength of the handling that drew the notice of French critics and American and English visitors alike. There was certainly nothing very novel in the idea of "The Prelude" or

neither very bright nor very pleasant. But it was not the learned way of handling color any more than the academic drawing or the well-known subjects that made the two paintings so very remarkable. It was their expressiveness—all those elements of skill and knowledge being used to a proper end, not displayed for themselves. In "The Prelude," especially, the feeling no less than the technical knowledge displayed in the drawing of the hands makes them as expressive of the mood of the subject as even her half-turned face.

This picture, as everybody knows, had a great success. It has been awarded the Salon medal, a dis-

The artist who has already achieved such a great success is now only thirty-two years of age. He was born in Boston. He is the grandson and namesake of the late Charles Sprague, the poet and great-grandson of Samuel Sprague, one of Boston's Revolutionary Tea Party, a good stonemason, and a soldier under Washington at Trenton and Princeton.

Mr. Pearce's proclivities toward art were strongly marked at a very early age, and in the winter of 1872-73 it was determined by his family to give way to them and send him to Paris for an education. While preparations were being made, however, he was seized with an alarming illness, and after a month's confine-

ment had to go to Florida for the winter. He was not sufficiently strong to undertake the journey until the following August. His original intention was to study at Munich, but by the emphatic advice of his friend, the late William M. Hunt, he changed his mind, and proceeded to Paris. There, he at once entered the studio of M. Bonnat.

With the approach of winter came a recurrence of his trouble. Before he had been a month at work he was ordered by his physician to the south of France. There, however, he was in a measure compensated for the interruption to his studies by making the acquaintance of F. A. Bridgman, which afterward ripened into a warm friendship. He went with Mr. Bridgman, in the winter of 1873, to the Nile, where the two passed four months of boating life, sketching and gathering artistic material.

On his return to Paris, however, the hemorrhage which had before been such an obstacle to his ambition again became troublesome, and this time, as winter drew on, he had to betake himself to Algiers. For several succeeding years he followed a similar mode of life, working in Paris while the climate permitted and in the winter journeying to Mentone, or Nice, or San Rafael, or some other southern sanitarium. He, besides, found it often impossible, even in quite mild weather, to stand the close atmosphere, the draughts and other physical inconveniences of the school, and, finally, he was obliged to confine his studies to his own studio, where M. Bonnat, a generous and warm-hearted man, visited him frequently to criticise and encourage.

Under all these difficulties, and while hampered by painful and alarming interruptions, Mr. Pearce soon managed to attract public notice to his work. The "Lamentations over the Death of the First-born," a scene of ancient Egyptian life, which will be remembered as having been on exhibition in New York some years ago, and the "Sacrifice of Abraham" were among his earliest pictures. The former gained him a valuable commission, which brought him to England to paint the portraits of Lord and Lady Harris. He received the "Mention Honorable" of the Salon for his "Decapitation of St. John the Baptist," in 1881,

owned by the Chicago Art Institute. The work upon this picture was interrupted and delayed nearly a year by a recurrence of his malady, which exiled him from his studio. His family feel indebted for his life and his subsequent successes to the affectionate care and nursing, during this period of illness, of his friend and brother artist, E. H. Blashfield.

Among Mr. Pearce's less known early efforts are the picture of an Italian girl, shown at the thirty-fifth annual reception of the Brooklyn Art Association in 1878. This was an academic painting, and something of the classroom clung to it, but even then his coloring was rich without being obtrusive, and the picture was notable for the expression of the countenance, and the naturalistic rendering of textures. After the "Lamentations over the Death of the First-born," mentioned above, the next of Mr. Pearce's works which reached America was the "Sacrifice of Abraham," which was on exhibition in Boston in 1879. It was considered remarkable work for a young artist, and to have shown a rapid advance, when compared with the former picture, in mastering the essentials of his art. It was broadly and carefully painted, finely drawn, and the details, notwithstanding the size of the canvas, were worked out with care, but without belittling the effect of the whole. His life-size portrait of a young lady, Miss Walworth, from the Paris Salon of 1876, was hung at the Art Club Exhibition in Boston, in 1877. It showed that his development was still in the same line, and with increased strength and character, but refinement still seemed to some to be wanting. "The Statue of Memnon" and a "Street Scene in Cairo" came the next year, and are said by those who have seen them to be marked by great

originality and force, reproducing Egyptian characteristics with wonderful success—the desert, the atmosphere, the peculiar life. "A Disappointment," called at first "Rendezvous Manqué," found its way to Philadelphia in 1880. Its subject was very different from those of former efforts. It shows a black-haired and dark-eyed girl, with a large hat of blue-green satin, white satin dress, and an armful of flowers, alone in a wooded landscape. The textures of the satin and of the feathers of the hat were still the best things in this picture, which was purchased by Mr. Story. The "Decapitation of St. John the Baptist" was the next



STUDY. (PÈRE BAINVILLE.) BY CHARLES SPRAGUE PEARCE.

pose," illustrated herewith, was painted for the Munich Exposition of the present year, and has been already bought for the collection of a Boston gentleman.

The turning from sad or dismal to more wholesome subjects has been attended by a marked gain in important artistic qualities. "The Water-Carrier" and the "Prelude" show a unity and breadth not always found in the earlier works. More than this, the quality of feeling—thought to be wanting to the painter because he did not care to give more than an indication of such sentiment as must have suggested the subjects of the "Death of the First-born" and the "Sacrifice of Abraham"—he could better express in pictures full of a gentle melancholy or a tender regard for the beauties of every-day life. All of this improvement is the result not so much of continued studies as of returning health, which has enabled him to finish a work "at a blow." As everything leads to the expectation that this recovery of health will be permanent, further progress may confidently be looked for; and even now we may rank Mr. Pearce with that band of young Americans who have of late years done so much for art and for their country's fame, and which includes his friends Bridgman and Blashfield.

#### THE EXHIBITION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY.

THE Academy at Philadelphia has an exhibition of paintings which is as good as that of our own Academy is bad, and that is saying a great deal.

Its special features are the abundance and fine quality of work by American students in Paris and Munich, particularly by the Paris men; the two large historical paintings by Philadelphians, the results of the Temple prize; and the generally fresh and hopeful character of works by students, amateurs and persons engaged in other employments. Most of the pictures sent by artists residing at present in Europe are of generous size, and many of them are magnificent works of art which would be a credit to any exhibition in the world, and which Breton, Bonnat, or Lefebvre need not be ashamed to call their own—works, in short, fully up to the world's best standard of art of the present day.

Of Charles S. Pearce, to whose biography we give place in the present number of THE ART AMATEUR, there are two splendid examples. His portrait of a young Japanese Daimio will, it is safe to say, be re-



STUDY. (ROSINA—CAPRI.) BY CHARLES SPRAGUE PEARCE.

they.

You. date he was the fourth American who had not distinguished. To this painting was also that the highest prize of the Pennsylvania Academy of Arts for the best figure painting in its history of 1881. It has been purchased, and is now

year's picture. It received honorable mention at the Salon, and was exhibited in Boston in September, 1881. After this the artist turned his attention once more to pleasanter themes. His "Rosina," a portrait of a little Capriote girl, was purchased from the